



# Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution

*Julia Alekseyeva (Illustrations)*

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## **Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution** Julia Alekseyeva (Illustrations)

Born in 1910 to a poor, Jewish family outside of Kiev, Lola lived through the Bolshevik revolution, a horrifying civil war, Stalinist purges, and the Holocaust. She taught herself to read, and supported her extended family working as a secretary for the notorious NKVD (which became the KGB) and later as a lieutenant for the Red Army. Her family, including 4-year-old Yulia, moved to the U.S. in the wake of Chernobyl and forged a new life.

*Soviet Daughter* united two generations of strong, independent women against a sweeping backdrop of the history of the USSR. Like Sarah Glidden in *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*, or Marjane Satrapi in *Persepolis*, Alekseyeva deftly combines compelling stories of women finding their way in the world with an examination of the ties we all have with our families, ethnicities, and the still-fresh traumas of the 20th century.

## **Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution Details**

Date : Published January 10th 2017 by Microcosm Publishing

ISBN : 9781621069690

Author : Julia Alekseyeva (Illustrations)

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# From Reader Review Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution for online ebook

## Devon says

I just finished reading this, it was actually a recommendation from my mom (who heard about it on the radio) and our local library didn't have it so she requested it and like magic they ordered it! So you can now check this out through the Santa Clara County library system, hooray!

Because it is definitely worth reading! I haven't read a lot of graphic novels (really just Nimona and some of the Sandman series) but I really loved this. It made me want to read more graphic novels and see what I've been missing out on!

It was very genuine, humorous in parts but also heartbreaking, and the illustration style reminded me of charcoal and watercolor at the same time, really dynamic (not used to discussing graphic pieces, can you tell? Definitely wanted to give it a try to review this book though, it so deserves it!)

Would recommend!

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## Brandon says

I was floored when I read my ARC of Soviet Daughter. Each page is bursting with authenticity. It starts with the subject matter, taken from the author's great-grandmother who actually lived in the USSR from its early golden years and endured the struggles of WWII. And follows through with the hand drawn images adorned with beautifully expressive inkwashes.

The novel also tells a unique story that links together two generations, one from the 20s and the other from the 00's. The author shows how they are tied together by a certain grit and political engagement. But this larger narrative never overshadows the beautiful interpersonal story of this cross generational relationship.

I highly recommend this graphic novel. It is in equal parts beautiful, personal, heartbreaking, uplifting, and truthful. You will walk away with a reinvigorated taste for the world.

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## Emily says

A compelling and harrowing story of the life of the author's great grandmother. The art style didn't quite work for me. It is dark and blurry, and I found it a bit of a strain to visually follow the narrative.

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## Emilia P says

So very Microcosm. Isn't Communism the best? I suppose so. Clearly a labor of love, a story of the author's great-grandma and the author's own journey to being a political person in her own right, inspired by that

journey. So....nice? Soviet Russia was weird, man. It's weird to believe in a cause that in so ways takes your life and even betrays you. And then inspires your great-grandkids to give themselves to a cause that might well do the same. A bit starry-eyed. Politics, man. That's what I learned. :)

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## **Bettie? says**

<http://www.npr.org/2017/01/22/5091583...>

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## **Eve says**

This was a fascinating graphic memoir about the Jewish experience in Ukraine and Russia post Revolution and then during WWII. Told from the perspective of the author (modern day) and her life as it intertwined with that of her great-grandmother. I'll definitely keep an eye out for more graphic novels from this press!

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## **Scarlett Readz and Runz....Through Novel Time & Distance says**

5 stars +++

A horrendously gripping graphic novel. A nonfiction historical memoir of Khinya Ignatovskaya (Lola), written by her great grand-daughter Julia Alekseyeva.

*“Lola had written a memoir and instructed us not to read it before she died. What lay inside was astonishing. This is the story held within her memoirs, growing up over the course of the 20th century. In between each chapter of Lola’s life, you will find a short slice of my own 21st century coming of age. It’s a story of our two generations, separated by 80 years-but somehow united in spite of everything.” –Julia Alekseyeva p.6*

This tribute is absolutely stunning in content in every way. The story, the plot, the timing, the artwork. All created by the talented great grand-daughter.

I stumbled upon this novel purely by accident snooping through graphic novels locally because I am always on the hunt for historical fiction and non-fiction reads. I am so glad I found it because it is AMAZING. It is the true accounts in history and humanity that get to me the most. I sometimes think that reading them is my way of saying, it is not forgotten and you’re sacrifice is not lost.

This is the blurb you can find on her website <http://www.jalekseyeva.com/news/> as well as an interview of the author and all her other works:

*“Soviet Daughter is the story of Julia Alekseyeva's great-grandmother Lola. Born in 1910 to a poor, Jewish family outside of Kiev, Lola lived through the Bolshevik revolution, a horrifying civil war, Stalinist purges, and the Holocaust. She taught herself to read, and supported her extended family working as a secretary for*

*the notorious NKVD (which became the KGB) and later as a lieutenant for the Red Army. Her family, including 4-year-old Julia, moved to the U.S. in the wake of Chernobyl and forged a new life. Interleaved with Lola's history we find Julia's own struggles of coming of age in an immigrant family and her political awakening in the midst of the radical politics of the turn of the millennium."*

*"At times heartbreaking and at times funny, this graphic novel memoir unites two generations of strong, independent women against a sweeping backdrop of the history of the USSR. Like Sarah Glidden in *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*, or Marjane Satrapi in *Persepolis*, Alekseyeva deftly combines compelling stories of women finding their way in the world with an examination of the ties we all have with our families, ethnicities, and the still-fresh traumas of the 20th century."*

Soviet Daughter was published January 10, 2017-- 100 years after the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Here is the link where you can see the author creating the artwork for the novel:  
<https://microcosmpublishing.com/catal...>

I highly recommend this graphic novel to historical fiction and non-fiction readers alike and I will be on the lookout for future works of her. I have a feeling we will be seeing, hearing and reading a lot more from this talented lady. Very well done and it will stay with me for a long time I'm sure.

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### **Sally Sugarman says**

This is a graphic novel memoir about two women. Lola is Julia's great grandmother who lived to be one hundred. She wrote a memoir which Julia found after Lola's death. Julia decided to use the money that Lola had left her to produce this book. Lola lived through the history of the Russian revolution and the Stalin era. The book shows the parallel lives of Lola and Julia. Julia was closer to her great grandmother than to any of her other relatives. Julia's life is shown in a series of interludes between Lola's history. As a Jew in Russia, Lola had many problems. In the United States, Julia's mother urges her to hide being Jewish. Lola was poor but enterprising, caring for her younger siblings in the large family to which she belonged. Lola is a survivor. She becomes a hard worker who is prized by her boss. She seems unaware of the mission of the KGB for which she works on a secretarial level. She is primarily self taught and hard working . She has several husbands along the way and two children. She loses family members as she goes through the revolution, the civil war and World War II. Although she loves a good time, she is always volunteering to help others and becomes a skilled nurse as she learns to care for the wounded soldiers. Despite her many skills she is limited as to how far she can advance because she is Jewish. Julia's struggles are of a different nature, including a bout with cancer. The contrast between the lives of these two strong and independent woman illustrate the changes in society as well as the different countries in which they grow up. The graphics are in black and white and are simple. The narrative dominates over the visuals. It is an instructive book and raises many questions as when one reads of Russians killing Jews to please the conquering Germans who are eventually defeated.

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### **Anne Fitzgerald says**

**I really want to like this book, but...**

I don't. I'll start with the good and that is the great-grandmother's story. It was interesting and enlightening. It's worth it to read this book for that. I absolutely hated the interludes. They took you away from the grandmother's story and I could care less about the author after reading them. It would make sense to do an interlude if it was relevant about what was going on in the main story, but they weren't. They are mostly the author complaining about her childhood and say I g her great-grandmother was the only one that underreported but she gave us no examples of that. So one star lost for that. If you read this, save the interludes for last. It will be a better story if you do. The artwork is okay. Sometimes it's really good and sometimes not. One star lost for inconsistency. Finally, don't get the digital version of this. I bought it from comixology because of the price difference and I'm highly disappointed. It's the hardest comic I've ever tried to read digitally. I had to blow up every series of panels and they were blurry. The blurriness along with the inconsistent art and lettering made it very difficult to read. One star lost for that. Save your money and get it from the library.

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### **Angela Boord says**

3.5 -ish stars. Maybe closer to 4.

I'm not really sure how to review this book. On the one hand, Lola's life - all 100 years of it -- is fascinating and inspiring. And the genesis of the book -- Lola's memoirs and family photos, compiled and drawn by Lola's great-granddaughter Julia -- also lends this book a high level of interest for me. I thought the graphic format, almost like a scrapbook, worked very well to convey the feeling of Lola's memoirs as family history first, and then as a very personal and immediate history of much of the 20th century, at least through Soviet eyes. In addition, this is a different kind of book for Americans to read, as Lola remained a committed communist her entire life and only emigrated to the US in her elder years because of concerns about Chernobyl's radioactivity after Julia was born. All of this was solidly a 4 star book.

The modern interludes are a little more problematic, because while they function as necessary frames for the reader to understand how the book came to be, the author is pretty young and takes herself pretty seriously. Lacking Lola's years, she is naturally somewhat less self-reflective. Linking some of the movements of the moment (such as Occupy Wall Street) to the Russian Revolution and Lola's struggles through the Interwar years, WWII, and the Stalinist purges seems to me to be somewhat... not the same.

But overall it was a good book that I appreciated reading, particularly as my own 100 year old grandfather just died last year.

Recommended for older teens and adults.

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### **Ashley says**

I feel bad giving this such a low rating. I thought the grandmother's story was interesting and at times moving, and I appreciate how much the author loved her and wanted to honor her. The problem is that the art was really not for me, to the point that it distracted me from the things that I liked.

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## **Marsha Altman says**

A surprisingly positive view of the author's great-grandmother's life in Soviet Russia. As a secretary for the NKVD, she seems to have avoided or been oblivious to the various purges, massacres, and gulags that we often find synonymous with the rule of Stalin. Most of her family was killed, but by Germans during the two world wars, or by non-Russians for being Jewish. The family eventually immigrated after Chernobyl. The author's constant interludes about growing up in America break up the flow of the story and the art is not fantastic.

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## **David Schaafsma says**

This is a graphic memoir and biography that is also what many memoirs are, a history of the time. What time? Julia Alekseyeva's great-grandmother Lola lived to 100 years, and died fairly recently, so the time span is an inviting 100 years. Both Lola and Julia are spirited and independent, though you really don't get very much compelling information about Julia, which we read in interludes from Lola's decade-by-decade story. I like the idea of the back and forth storytelling, but the story of Julia itself, eh. The point for her is that no one understood her like Lola. It's in part a coming-of-age story --for two women--that reminds one of Satrapi's *Persepolis*, in places.

Lola was born near Kieve in 1910. Jewish, she lived through the Bolshevik revolution, civil war, Stalinist purges, pogroms, and the Holocaust. She worked as a secretary for what became the KGB KGB. She had many boyfriends and husbands and recalls them all, entertainingly. Her family, including 4-year-old Julia, emigrated to Chicago in the wake of Chernobyl. The art is pretty muddy, and the panels are packed and sometimes hard to read, but I read it all through and enjoyed it.

PS: My friend/student J read it IN my class today and liked the art, thought it was a little blurry like memory itself, found it perfect form for the content, which is an interesting point.

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## **Maggie Gordon says**

*Soviet Daughter* is a compelling biography of a young Jewish woman who grew up in Russia during the early part of the century. It's always fascinating to see examples of women living independently in the past when that is not a narrative that gets much attention in our history lessons. Lola was the eldest daughter of a large family, and one of the few to survive the war and pogroms of the era. She married more than once, had boyfriends, raised a daughter on her own, and worked all throughout her adult life (and much of what we would consider her youth as well).

There are two points of weakness in this collection. The author adds in pieces of her own story in between chapters of her grandmother's life, but her moments are less interesting. There are some moments worth thinking about, but not enough reflection to actually make them work.

Additionally, the art and the printing are a bit weak. Sometimes it's hard to tell which exactly is going wrong, but the pages are sometimes quite muddy and hard to make out.

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**Carla says**

I've always been a sucker for a good autobiographical graphic novel, and this one is no exception. This will appeal to fans of *Fun Home* and *Persepolis*. The narrative is brisk and the no-nonsense tone, with its utter lack of self-pity, underscores the resilience of the women in this tale. A perfect read on Women's Day!

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